

February 27, 2023

Testimony to the Connecticut Assembly, Joint Housing Committee in support of HB 6781.

Dear Sen. Moore, Rep. Luxemburg, and distinguished members of the Joint Housing Committee:

My name is Stephen Block, I am a lifelong Connecticut resident, veteran, and a renter. I currently live in Bristol with my wife and adult son. I am writing to strongly urge you to support H.B. 6781. Even more, I hope you will amend H.B. 6781 to protect tenants by adding more limits on how long prior evictions records can stay on the CT Judicial Branch website.

It is already challenging to find affordable housing in Connecticut, but after having to leave my prior home earlier this year, I have seen first-hand from my experience how a prior eviction record can make finding housing nearly impossible. For this reason, I support H.B. 6781 with amendments that would further protect tenants with past evictions. I also support the bill's provisions limiting the fees tenants would pay as part of a rental application.

We moved into our previous home in 2004. In February 2022, after living in the apartment for 18 years, our landlord told us we needed to move out by April. We began searching for a new apartment, but two months was not enough time. I have been disabled since 2009 and have been unable to work, and we struggled to find an apartment that we could afford.

On April 6th, we heard a knock at the door and were served with eviction papers for non-payment of rent, even though we had until April 10th to pay the month's rent. This eviction proceeding was ultimately dismissed by the judge; however, it remains on Connecticut's judicial website. The landlord then attempted to evict us again. We were ultimately able to reach a stipulation agreement that gave us until February 2023 to stay but also raised our rent. This record, too, remained online.

I continued to search for housing for my family. I worked on my credit score and my son built up his credit. Our family doesn't have a car. We can't afford one, and we needed to stay in Bristol because our adult son walks to work. Having an eviction record, however, was a very serious barrier. No one wanted to rent to us. Months passed by and we were starting to run out of time. When we would apply to a rental, we also had to pay fees. We applied, we got denied, we'd look someplace else, and we'd get denied again. We kept losing money just trying to find a place.

It wasn't until our lawyer wrote a letter as part of our application that a landlord was willing to rent to us. She vouched for us, letting the landlord know that in 18 years we had never missed a payment. Finally, on February 8th, we were able to sign a lease on a new apartment. Because our landlord forced us out of our apartment immediately, we didn't have enough time to move and had to leave a lot of our belongings behind. Many of these items were irreplaceable, including a steamer trunk from the 1890s and our son's guitars, and now they are lost to us forever.

This search was hard. We felt anxious. During the time we were looking for a new rental, we were afraid to even see our landlord. Now in our new apartment, we are finally able to breathe again. But this has been a tough road. It shouldn't take a renter a year to find an apartment. As soon as landlords see that you have an eviction record, they don't want to consider your

application. That's what happened to us: the door just kept closing in our face. But we finally found a great place to live, and we were able to stay in our community.

Because of my experience, I hope you all will see fit to support H.B. 6781 and to make it protect more tenants by limiting how long certain eviction records can remain online.

Thank you for this opportunity to testify.

Stephen Block
Bristol, CT